THE DAILY UPSC BRIEF

HIGH-YIELD DAILY SOURCES & ANALYSIS | 10 OCTOBER 2026

TODAY'S COVERAGE

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PRELIMS POINTERS — TODAY IN ONE LINE EACH

1. **Rumbek** — town in South Sudan, the world's youngest country (independent from Sudan in 2011).
2. **Chess Olympiad 2026** — held at Samarkand, Uzbekistan; India's women's team won bronze.
3. **Laver Cup** — tennis team event (Team Europe vs Team World) founded by Roger Federer; first held in Prague, 2017.
4. **Thucydides Trap** — Graham Allison's term for the risk of war when a rising power challenges an established one.
5. **Kindleberger Trap** — Joseph Nye's term for disorder when a rising power will not provide global public goods.

HOW TO READ THIS BRIEF

- ☐ Why in News
- ☐ Target Prelims MCQ
- ☐ How to Use in UPSC Mains
- ☐ Mains Practice / Case Study Question

GS PAPER 1: SOCIETY & CULTURE

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 1

Sermons in Kashmiri: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq announced that Friday sermons across Kashmir's mosques on October 16 will be delivered in Kashmiri to preserve the language. Kashmiri is in the Eighth Schedule and is one of five official languages of J&K under the J&K Official Languages Act, 2020.

How to use: *GS1 (culture, language): example of community-led efforts to protect mother tongues — useful with Article 350A and NEP 2020's mother-tongue emphasis.*

GS PAPER 2: POLITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE & IR

Regulation, Not Prohibition: SC Calls Delhi's Blanket Transit Ban 'Over-Reaching'

Why in news: Ahead of a youth protest at Jantar Mantar, the SC called the Delhi Police's shutdown of Metro and train services into the capital 'over-reaching' and asked for a suitable protest site.

Key Details:

- **The curbs:** 245 trains were cancelled, 57 Metro stations shut, a 24-hour Internet shutdown imposed near the site and holding centres set up in all 15 districts.
- **SC's line:** 'A distinction exists between total prohibition and regulation' — a prudent decision to permit Metro and rail operation may be made 'in a suitable and regulated manner'.
- **Proportionality:** Senior advocates argued that a city cannot be shut down 'because you cannot handle a bunch of protesters'; restrictions must be the least intrusive option.
- **Next step:** The Centre welcomed the Court's proposal for an alternative open site with basic facilities for peaceful protest.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Legal tools:** Prohibitory orders were issued under Section 163 of the BNSS (earlier Section 144 CrPC).
- **Information curbs:** The IT Ministry asked social media platforms to remove content 'likely to cause public disorder' on request.

How courts have drawn the line on protests

Case	Holding
Himat Lal K. Shah (1973)	State cannot give police absolute discretion over public meetings on streets
Ramlila Maidan incident (2012)	Midnight eviction of sleeping protesters violated Article 19(1)(b)
Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (2018)	No blanket ban on protests at Jantar Mantar and Boat Club; regulate instead
Amit Sahni (2020)	Public ways cannot be occupied indefinitely; protests must be at designated sites
Anuradha Bhasin (2020)	Internet shutdowns must be necessary, proportionate and periodically reviewed

Right to Assemble: Article 19(1)(b) & 19(3)

- **The right:** Citizens may assemble peaceably and without arms; it covers meetings, processions and demonstrations.
- **Limits:** Under Article 19(3), the State may impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India or public order.
- **Only citizens:** Article 19 rights are available to citizens, not foreigners.
- **Section 163 BNSS:** Lets a magistrate issue urgent orders to prevent danger or disturbance; such orders last up to two months.
- **Telecom suspension:** Internet suspension is now governed by Section 20 of the Telecommunications Act, 2023.
- **Not to confuse:** Strikes are not a fundamental right (T.K. Rangarajan, 2003), unlike peaceful assembly.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (fundamental rights, police powers) to show that the State must choose the least restrictive means — regulating a protest is legitimate, shutting down a city is not.

Mains value-add: In Himat Lal K. Shah v. Commissioner of Police (1973), the SC held that citizens have a right to use public streets for assembly, which the State may regulate but not deny outright — cite it as the foundation of protest jurisprudence.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the right to assemble under the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:
1. Article 19(1)(b) guarantees the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
2. Reasonable restrictions on this right can be imposed in the interest of public order.
3. Foreign nationals residing in India enjoy this right equally with citizens.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

`(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3`

Answer: (c) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Article 19(1)(b) protects peaceful, unarmed assembly (Statement 1 true). Article 19(3) allows reasonable restrictions for public order and the sovereignty and integrity of India (Statement 2 true). Article 19 rights belong only to citizens, unlike Articles 14 and 21 — the trap (Statement 3 false).

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | BNSS: Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita | CrPC: Code of Criminal Procedure | IT: Information Technology

The 50% Ceiling Holds: MP's 27% OBC Quota and A.P.'s 34% BC Quota Fall

Why in news: The MP High Court struck down the 2019 law raising OBC reservation from 14% to 27%, and the SC rejected Andhra Pradesh's plea to restore 34% BC reservation in local bodies.

> **Story so far:** The 2 Oct Brief covered the A.P. High Court quashing the 34% BC quota for local bodies. New today: the SC upheld that ruling, and MP's 27% OBC law fell on the same 50% principle.

Key Details:

- **MP ruling:** A Division Bench held the State showed no 'extraordinary conditions' to breach the 50% ceiling; OBCs are 'adequately represented' under Article 16(4).
- **Interim formula:** Since 2022, MP filled 87% of posts and kept 13% on hold; appointments made under the 27% quota between 2019 and 2022 remain safe.
- **A.P. ruling:** The SC said data from a 'unified family survey' is not a dedicated empirical study of backwardness in local bodies.
- **Core test:** Any reservation beyond 50% needs quantifiable data and exceptional circumstances, not just a large OBC population.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **MP's argument:** OBCs form more than 50% of the State's population, so 14% was inadequate.
- **A.P.'s response:** The TDP said it will still give 34% of seats to BCs in local polls through party tickets.

Landmark rulings on the 50% ceiling

Case	What it held
M.R. Balaji (1962)	Reservation should generally stay below 50%
Indra Sawhney (1992)	50% rule; exceed only in extraordinary situations, e.g. far-flung areas
K. Krishna Murthy (2010) / Vikas Gawali (2021)	Local-body OBC quota needs the 'triple test'
Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil (2021)	Maratha quota struck down; no exceptional case shown
Janhit Abhiyan (2022)	10% EWS quota upheld; the ceiling applies to backward-class quotas

The Ninth Schedule & Reservation Limits

- **Origin:** Added by the First Amendment, 1951 to protect land-reform laws from court challenge (Article 31B).
- **Who adds:** Parliament can place a law in the Ninth Schedule by constitutional amendment.
- **Tamil Nadu:** TN's 69% reservation Act was placed in the Ninth Schedule by the 76th Amendment, 1994.
- **Judicial review:** In I.R. Coelho (2007), the SC held laws added after April 24, 1973 can be tested against the basic structure.
- **Not to confuse:** The 50% ceiling is a judicial rule, not a constitutional text; Article 16(4) itself names no limit.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (social justice, judiciary) to show the tension between demographic claims and the equality code — and why sub-categorisation and better data may serve justice better than raising the cap.

Mains value-add: The Justice G. Rohini Commission on OBC sub-categorisation submitted its report in 2023 after finding that a small number of castes corner most central OBC benefits — cite it to argue for fairer distribution within the existing quota.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to reservation and the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:
1. The 50% ceiling on reservation was laid down in the Indra Sawhney case.
2. Tamil Nadu's 69% reservation law was placed in the Ninth Schedule by a constitutional amendment.
3. Laws placed in the Ninth Schedule after April 24, 1973 are fully immune from judicial review.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: Indra Sawhney (1992) set the 50% rule (Statement 1 true). The 76th Amendment, 1994 placed TN's Act in the Ninth Schedule (Statement 2 true). I.R. Coelho (2007) held that post-April 24, 1973 additions can be reviewed for basic-structure violations — the 'immunity' idea is the trap (Statement 3 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2018: "Consider the following statements: 1. The Parliament of India can place a particular law in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution of India. 2. The validity of a law placed in the Ninth Schedule cannot be examined by any court and no judgement can be made on it. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" — Answer: (a) 1 only.

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** OBC: Other Backward Classes | BC: Backward Classes | MP: Madhya Pradesh | A.P.: Andhra Pradesh | SC: Supreme Court | TDP: Telugu Desam Party | EWS: Economically Weaker Sections | TN: Tamil Nadu

Fixing Entrance Exams: House Panel Asks NTA to Move to Computer-Based Tests

Why in news: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education recommended that the NTA shift flagship exams, especially NEET-UG, to computer-based testing and create a central registry to blacklist compromised vendors.

Key Details:

- **Proposed: CBT:** Pen-and-paper exams carry handling risks; question papers should reach centres through encrypted delivery just before the exam.
- **Proposed: blacklist:** A central, inter-agency registry so a vendor penalised by one body cannot get contracts from another.
- **Proposed: question banks:** Large, varied, continuously updated banks are the long-term defence against leaks.
- **Capacity gaps:** NTA has a vacancy rate above 40% in key permanent posts; panel suggests 100–200 node IT labs at public institutions.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Fairness:** Any normalisation across multi-session tests must be independently audited and explained to students in advance.
- **Security:** Frisking and checks must not turn centres into 'hostile environments' for candidates.

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024

- **Coverage:** Exams by UPSC, SSC, RRBs, IBPS, the NTA and Central ministries' recruitment bodies.
- **Individuals:** Unfair means draw 5–10 years' jail and a fine up to ₹50 lakh.
- **Service providers:** Fine up to ₹5 crore and an eight-year bar from conducting public exams.
- **Organised crime:** 7–10 years' jail and a fine of at least ₹10 crore; property can be forfeited.
- **Nature:** All offences are cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable.
- **Not to confuse:** The NTA (2017) is a society under the Education Ministry, not a statutory body.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (education, governance) to discuss exam integrity as a public-trust issue — technology, vendor accountability and institutional capacity must move together.

Mains value-add: The K. Radhakrishnan Committee (2024), set up after the NEET-UG leak, recommended that the NTA move towards computer-based testing and focus only on entrance exams — cite it to show the panel's advice builds on earlier expert findings.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. A Parliamentary committee has proposed moving national entrance exams to computer-based testing and blacklisting compromised vendors. Critically examine whether these measures can restore trust in India's examination system. (150 words)

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** NTA: National Testing Agency | NEET-UG: National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) | CBT: Computer-Based Test | IT: Information Technology | UPSC: Union Public Service Commission | SSC: Staff Selection Commission | RRBs: Railway Recruitment Boards | IBPS: Institute of Banking Personnel Selection

Navi Pillay Wins the Nobel Peace Prize as the U.S. Sanctions the ICC

Why in news: South African jurist and former UN human rights chief Navi Pillay, 85, won the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize; hours later, the U.S. imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court.

Key Details:

- **The citation:** Honoured for promoting international law 'as it comes under attack'; the Committee said peace requires justice.
- **Her career:** ICTR judge and president, ICC judge, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008–14), and chair of the UN inquiry on Gaza.
- **Gaza findings:** The commission concluded that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza; Israel rejects this.
- **Pushback:** The U.S. sanctioned the ICC the same day; the ICC said this would not halt its work.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Symbolism:** Pillay heard the news in Nuremberg, where Nazi war-crimes trials laid the foundations of international law.
- **Background:** Born to parents of Tamil descent in apartheid-era South Africa; first non-white woman judge of its High Court.

The International Criminal Court (ICC)

- **Founding treaty:** The Rome Statute, adopted in 1998, came into force on July 1, 2002.
- **Seat:** The Hague, Netherlands.
- **Crimes:** Tries individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
- **Complementarity:** Acts only when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute.
- **Non-members:** India, the U.S., China and Russia are not States parties.
- **Not to confuse:** The ICJ is a UN organ that settles disputes between States; the ICC is an independent court that tries individuals.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (international institutions) and GS4 (courage of conviction) to discuss accountability for mass crimes and why major powers stay outside the ICC.

Mains value-add: Pillay sat on the ICTR bench in Prosecutor v. Akayesu (1998), the first international judgment to recognise rape as an act of genocide — cite it to show how international courts have widened protection for victims.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to the International Criminal Court (ICC), consider the following statements:
1. India is a State party to the Rome Statute.
2. The ICC can try individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.
3. The ICC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

`(a) 1 and 2 only  (b) 2 and 3 only  (c) 1, 2 and 3  (d) 2 only`

Answer: (d) 2 only

Explanation: India has neither signed nor ratified the Rome Statute (Statement 1 false). The ICC has jurisdiction over these four core crimes (Statement 2 true). The ICJ, not the ICC, is a principal UN organ; the ICC is a treaty-based court — the ICJ/ICC mix-up is the trap (Statement 3 false).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** UN: United Nations | ICC: International Criminal Court | ICTR: International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda | ICJ: International Court of Justice

BRICS After the New Delhi Summit: Consensus on Paper, Strain Beneath

Why in news: The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi (September 12–13, 2026) adopted a unanimous Declaration, but analysts warn that China's dominance and India–China tensions limit the bloc.

Key Details:

- **Declaration:** Calls for reform of the UN and Bretton Woods bodies, local-currency trade and cross-border payment links; no common currency.
- **India's imprint:** Consensus, strategic autonomy and a section on AI governance and wider access to computing resources.
- **China factor:** China's economy now outweighs all other members combined, creating an imbalance within the group.
- **Verdict:** An age of 'variable geometry' and issue-based coalitions, not deep alliances — BRICS cannot yet act in unison.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Origins:** First BRIC summit at Yekaterinburg, Russia (2009); South Africa joined in 2011; expansion from 2024.
- **Next chair:** China will host the 19th summit in 2027.

BRICS institutions at a glance

Institution	Year	Key fact
New Development Bank	2014 (Fortaleza)	Headquartered in Shanghai; funds infrastructure and sustainable development
Contingent Reserve Arrangement	2014	$100 billion pool for members' balance-of-payments stress; separate from the NDB
Partner-country tier	2024 (Kazan)	A second ring of countries below full membership

BRICS: Evolution & Structure

- **Term:** 'BRIC' was coined by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill in 2001.
- **Format:** No charter or secretariat; works by consensus, with an annually rotating chair.
- **Expansion:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the UAE joined from January 2024; Indonesia joined in 2025.
- **Financial arms:** The NDB lends; the CRA is a reserve-pooling arrangement and does not lend for projects.
- **Not to confuse:** IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa, 2003) is a separate democratic trilateral forum.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS2 (groupings involving India) to weigh BRICS as a Global South platform against its internal imbalance, and to illustrate India's multi-alignment.

Mains value-add: India has hosted 'Voice of the Global South' summits since January 2023 — cite it to show India uses BRICS alongside other forums to champion developing-country interests rather than to join an anti-West bloc.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:
1. The first BRIC summit was held at Yekaterinburg in Russia.
2. South Africa joined the grouping in 2011.
3. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement is the project-lending arm of the New Development Bank.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

`(a) 1 and 2 only  (b) 2 only  (c) 1 and 3 only  (d) 1, 2 and 3`

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The first BRIC summit met at Yekaterinburg in 2009 (Statement 1 true). South Africa became a member in 2011, turning BRIC into BRICS (Statement 2 true). The CRA is a separate reserve-pooling mechanism for balance-of-payments support, not part of the NDB (Statement 3 false, the trap).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2016: "Consider the following statements: 1. New Development Bank has been set up by APEC. 2. The headquarters of New Development Bank is in Shanghai. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?" — Answer: (b) 2 only.

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (and new members) | UN: United Nations | AI: Artificial Intelligence | NDB: New Development Bank | CRA: Contingent Reserve Arrangement | UAE: United Arab Emirates | IBSA: India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 2

Cap on Form 7: amid bulk filings during the SIR, the ECI capped Form 7 applications (objection/deletion) at 10 per elector for the claims period and five a month during continuous updation; party booth-level agents may file up to 50 a day.

How to use: *GS2 (electoral process): example of procedural safeguards against misuse of objection forms to delete genuine voters.*

Livestreamed court proceedings: the SC upheld its ban on unauthorised use of livestreamed hearings for commercial gain, while noting livestreaming itself follows Swapnil Tripathi (2018).

How to use: *GS2 (judiciary, transparency): cite on open courts balanced against misuse of court footage.*

India–U.S. friction: the MEA called U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance's description of Indian IT professionals as 'indentured servants' 'deeply offensive'; the U.S. paused PERM labour certification for eight IT firms. About 70% of H-1B holders are Indian.

How to use: *GS2 (India–U.S., diaspora): example of how migration policy has become a fault line in bilateral ties.*

Pakistan in Saudi Arabia: Pakistan said it has 'substantial' forces in Saudi Arabia in a defensive role under the August 2026 defence pact with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, which pledges mutual help if any member is attacked.

How to use: *GS2 (West Asia, neighbourhood): note the new security triangle in India's extended neighbourhood.*

GS PAPER 3: ECONOMY, SKILLS & ENVIRONMENT

RBI Tightens the Daily Cash Reserve Requirement for Banks

Why in news: The RBI said banks must keep at least 99% of their required CRR every day from October 16, up from 90%, to absorb surplus liquidity of about ₹3.88 lakh crore.

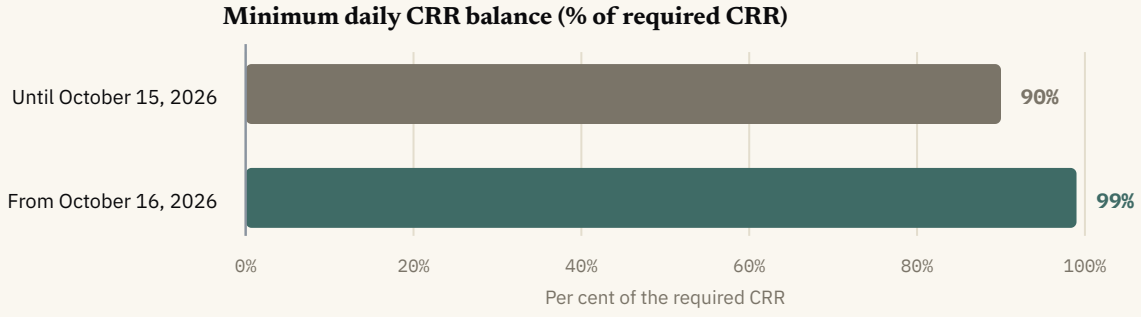
Story so far: The 8 Oct Brief covered the repo rate hike to 5.5% and the shift to 'calibrated tightening'. New today: a liquidity step that backs the hike by draining surplus cash.

Key Details:

- **What changed:** CRR is assessed as a fortnightly average; banks could earlier dip to 90% on any day if they made it up later.
- **Why:** Surplus liquidity weakens the transmission of a rate hike; tighter daily maintenance mops up spare funds.
- **Effect:** Banks have less room to lend out short-term surplus, pushing overnight rates closer to the repo rate.
- **Signal:** Together with the hike, the step shows RBI using both price (rates) and quantity (liquidity) tools against inflation.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Current CRR:** 3% of net demand and time liabilities, after cuts in four tranches in 2025.
- **No return:** RBI pays no interest on CRR balances, so it is a cost for banks.



CRR & SLR: Reserve Requirements

- **CRR:** Cash banks must keep with the RBI as a share of NDTL; set under Section 42 of the RBI Act, 1934.
- **SLR:** Liquid assets (cash, gold, approved securities) banks keep themselves; set under Section 24 of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- **Effect of a CRR rise:** Banks have less money to lend, so liquidity tightens.
- **No interest:** CRR balances earn nothing; SLR securities earn interest.
- **Not to confuse:** The repo rate changes the price of money; the CRR changes its quantity in the system.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (monetary policy) to explain how liquidity management supports rate decisions — and why transmission to lending rates depends on both.

Mains value-add: The Narasimham Committee (1991) recommended phasing down high CRR and SLR so that banks could lend more productively — cite it to show how reserve requirements moved from a financing tool to a monetary tool.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to reserve requirements for banks in India, consider the following statements:
1. The Cash Reserve Ratio is prescribed under Section 42 of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
2. The RBI pays interest to banks on their CRR balances.
3. The Statutory Liquidity Ratio is prescribed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (c) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: CRR flows from Section 42 of the RBI Act (Statement 1 true). RBI pays no interest on CRR balances (Statement 2 false, the trap). SLR is set under Section 24 of the Banking Regulation Act (Statement 3 true).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2010: "When the Reserve Bank of India announces an increase of the Cash Reserve Ratio, what does it mean? (a) The commercial banks will have less money to lend (b) The Reserve Bank of India will have less money to lend (c) The Union Government will have less money to lend (d) The commercial banks will have more money to lend" — Answer: (a).

■ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** RBI: Reserve Bank of India | CRR: Cash Reserve Ratio | SLR: Statutory Liquidity Ratio | NDTL: Net Demand and Time Liabilities

WorldSkills 2026: India Enters the Top 10, and the Case for 'Skill-Ex'

Why in news: India finished 10th at the 48th WorldSkills Competition in Shanghai — its best result — with six silver medals and 20 Medallions for Excellence.

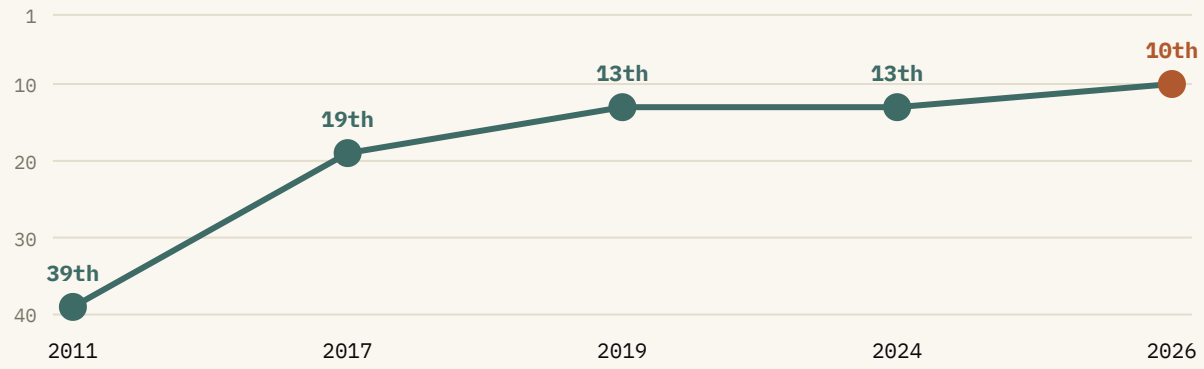
Key Details:

- **Firsts:** India competed in 11 skills for the first time and won three of its six silvers in them, including dental prosthetics and digital media design.
- **Pipeline:** Over 3.65 lakh youth registered for IndiaSkills across 63 skills; about 650 reached the national finals and 70 were chosen.
- **'Skill-Ex':** Alongside Capex (building assets) and Opex (running them), investing in people who build and maintain assets.
- **Social shift:** Skill-based careers must earn the same respect as degrees for families to choose them.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **PM-SETU:** A ₹60,000-crore scheme to upgrade 1,000 government ITIs in a hub-and-spoke model with industry partners.
- **WorldSkills:** Held every two years; over 1,400 competitors from about 70 countries and regions compete.

India's climb at WorldSkills (overall rank; lower is better)



2026 (Shanghai): first top-10 finish — 6 silvers and 20 Medallions for Excellence from 70 competitors in 63 skills.

India's Skilling Framework

- **MSDE:** The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship was created in 2014.
- **NSQF:** The National Skills Qualifications Framework grades skills from level 1 to 10.
- **NCVET:** Set up in 2018 as the regulator of vocational education and training.
- **PM-SETU:** Approved May 2025: ₹60,000 crore over five years; World Bank and ADB co-finance half of the Central share.
- **NCoEs:** Five National Centres of Excellence at NSTIs in Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kanpur and Ludhiana.
- **Not to confuse:** PMKVY is a short-term certification scheme; ITIs offer longer craftsman training.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (employment, human capital) and GS2 (education) to argue that skill depth — not only degrees — will decide India's demographic dividend.

Mains value-add: The Bhagavad Gita (18.46) — 'sva-karmana tam abhyarchya siddhim vindati manavah' (one attains perfection by worshipping through one's own work) — cite it to argue for the dignity of skilled labour.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to skill development in India, consider the following statements:
1. The National Skills Qualifications Framework organises qualifications into levels from 1 to 10.
2. The WorldSkills Competition is held every year.
3. The PM-SETU scheme for ITI upgradation is co-financed by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only (c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only

Explanation: NSQF has 10 levels (Statement 1 true). WorldSkills is biennial, not annual (Statement 2 false, the trap). The World Bank and ADB together co-finance 50% of the Central share of PM-SETU (Statement 3 true).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2018: "With reference to Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, consider the following statements: 1. It is the flagship scheme of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. 2. It, among other things, will also impart training in soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy. 3. It aims to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country to the National Skill Qualification Framework." — Answer: (c) 2 and 3 only.

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** ITIs: Industrial Training Institutes | MSDE: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship | NSQF: National Skills Qualifications Framework | NCVET: National Council for Vocational Education and Training | PM-SETU: PM Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs | ADB: Asian Development Bank | NCoEs: National Centres of Excellence | NSTIs: National Skill Training Institutes | PMKVY: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

Keralam's Captive Elephants: Health Checks and a Shrinking Population

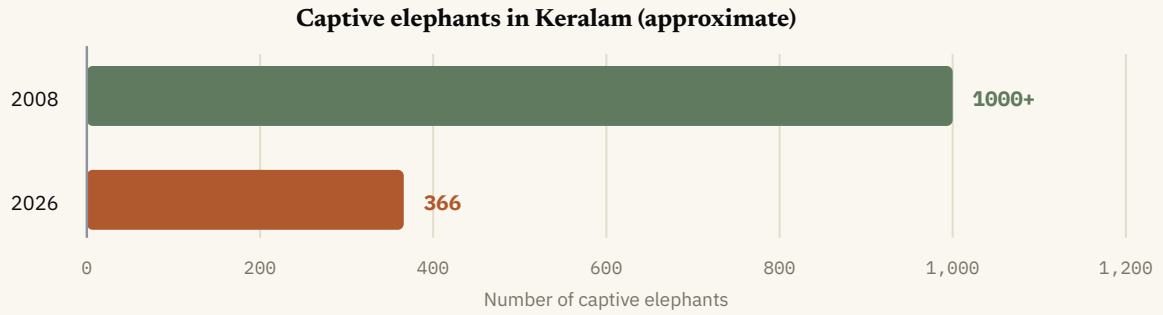
Why in news: Keralam began 'master health checks' for captive elephants, while the SC sought a medical report on Uttoly Raman, the State's tallest captive tusker.

Key Details:

- **Health camp:** 17 elephants were screened at Thrissur for blood sugar, cholesterol, kidney and liver function, with KVASU's technical support.
- **Why now:** A worrying pattern of captive elephants collapsing and dying suddenly; each animal gets a health card for follow-up.
- **SC scrutiny:** The SC asked why the tusker's custody, handed to the government in June, was not disclosed, and sought a report before October 12.
- **Welfare gap:** Long festival parades, heat, chaining and poor diet stress captive animals.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Decline:** Keralam's captive elephants fell from over 1,000 in 2008 to around 366, per the owners' federation.
- **Next phase:** Camps will extend to Kottayam and Kollam and become a regular monitoring system.



Protecting the Asian Elephant

- **Status:** Endangered on the IUCN Red List; listed in Schedule I of the WPA, 1972.
- **Heritage:** Declared India's National Heritage Animal in 2010.
- **Project Elephant:** Launched in 1992; merged with Project Tiger into one division in 2023.
- **Captive elephants:** Owning or transferring one needs a certificate and the State Chief Wildlife Warden's permission.
- **2024 Rules:** The Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024 require the elephant's genetic profile to be recorded before any transfer.
- **Not to confuse:** Elephant Reserves are notified by States on the Centre's advice; they are not a category under the WPA.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS3 (conservation, animal welfare) to discuss the conflict between cultural practices and welfare of captive wildlife, and why health monitoring must become routine.

Mains value-add: The Elephant Task Force report 'Gajah' (2010), chaired by Mahesh Rangarajan, recommended a National Elephant Conservation Authority and better care standards for captive elephants — cite it as the policy benchmark.

TARGET PRELIMS MCQ

Q. With reference to elephant conservation in India, consider the following statements:
1. The Asian elephant is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
2. Project Elephant was merged with Project Tiger into a single division in 2023.
3. Transfer of a captive elephant within a State requires the approval of the Union Environment Ministry.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

`(a) 1 and 2 only  (b) 2 only  (c) 1 and 3 only  (d) 1, 2 and 3`

Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only

Explanation: The Asian elephant is Endangered on the IUCN Red List (Statement 1 true). In 2023 the two projects were merged into the Project Tiger and Elephant division (Statement 2 true). Transfers are decided by the State's Chief Wildlife Warden, not the Union Ministry — the trap (Statement 3 false).

Related PYQ: UPSC Prelims 2020: "With reference to Indian elephants, consider the following statements: 1. The leader of an elephant group is a female. 2. The maximum gestation period can be 22 months. 3. An elephant can normally go on calving till the age of 40 years only. 4. Among the States in India, the highest elephant population is in Kerala." — Answer: (a) 1 and 2 only.

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** SC: Supreme Court | KVASU: Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University | IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature | WPA: Wild Life (Protection) Act

QUICK FACTS & EXAMPLES — GS PAPER 3

Greenfield investment: UNCTAD's Trade and Development Report 2026 says India drew 5.7% of global greenfield investment in 2020–25, more than double China's 2.8%; strategic sectors' share rose from 16% to 44%, led by AI infrastructure.
How to use: *GS3 (investment): cite on India's rise as a 'China-plus-one' destination.*

Poppy to bamboo: Manipur's Forest Department has planted bamboo on 255 of 307 hectares of forest cleared for illegal poppy cultivation in Chandel, Churachandpur and Senapati; about 78% of the State is forest land.
How to use: *GS3 (internal security, environment): example of livelihood-based alternatives to illicit crops in the Golden Triangle's neighbourhood.*

Decriminalisation on trains: under Section 145(2) of the Railways Act, 1989, as amended by the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026, playing loud music or videos on trains can draw a ₹1,000 fine; persistent nuisance can mean up to six months' jail or a ₹5,000 fine.
How to use: *GS3/GS2 (Jan Vishwas reforms): example of graded penalties replacing blanket criminalisation.*

Critical minerals: the Mines Secretary said a policy on stockpiling critical minerals for defence, aerospace and energy will come within a month, along with processing parks in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
How to use: *GS3 (energy security): note as a stated plan, not yet notified.*

Drug advertising: a draft amendment to the Drugs Rules, 1945 seeks to bar retailers and distributors from advertising Schedule H, H1 and X (prescription) drugs without prior sanction.
How to use: *GS2/GS3 (health regulation): cite on curbing self-medication; still a draft.*

GS PAPER 4: ETHICS

Duty to the Last Moment: A Bus Driver's Sense of Responsibility

Why in news: An APSRTC driver suffering a heart attack at the wheel parked his bus with about 40 passengers safely on the roadside near Tuni, Andhra Pradesh, before collapsing; he died on arrival at hospital.

Key Details:

- **The act:** The 34-year-old driver of the Kakinada–Visakhapatnam bus brought the vehicle to a safe halt despite a sudden medical emergency.
- **Recognition:** The APSRTC chairman praised his 'exceptional presence of mind and a strong sense of responsibility' and promised support to his family.
- **GS4 concept:** This illustrates dedication to public service and a duty of care towards those in one's charge — values UPSC names as foundational.
- **Beyond rules:** No rulebook demands such conduct; it reflects internalised values, the essence of professional ethics.

Data/Facts/Example:

- **Lives saved:** All passengers were safe; a major accident was averted.
- **Institutional duty:** Transport bodies owe frontline staff health screening and support for families.

Duty, Responsibility & Accountability

- **Duty:** An obligation one owes because of one's role; in Kant's view, the right act is done because it is right.
- **Responsibility:** Ownership of outcomes for those affected by one's actions, even under pressure.
- **Accountability:** Being answerable to others for how a duty was discharged.
- **Nishkama karma:** The Bhagavad Gita's idea of doing one's duty without attachment to reward.
- **Not to confuse:** Responsibility is internal and moral; accountability is external and institutional.

How to use in UPSC Mains: Use in GS4 (values in public service, professional ethics) as an example of duty of care by a frontline worker — and of the organisation's reciprocal duty to its staff.

Mains value-add: The Second ARC's 4th Report, 'Ethics in Governance' (2007), recommended a code of ethics that puts the public interest above personal interest — cite it to frame duty of care as a core public-service value.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTION

Q. 'Ethics is what one does when no one is watching.' With reference to frontline public servants, discuss how a sense of duty and responsibility goes beyond formal rules, and what organisations owe such employees in return. (150 words)

▪ **[Abbreviations & Terminology]:** APSRTC: Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation | ARC: Administrative Reforms Commission